17 November 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo’s Bases of Yoga, Chapter 2, “Faith – Aspiration – Surrender”.

Sweet Mother, here it is written: “The Truth for you is to feel the Divine in you, open to the Mother and work for the Divine till you are aware of her in all your activities.” Why has he said “the Divine” once and another time “the Mother”?

Probably he considers these the two aspects of the problem. The truth is that there are people who can more easily get into contact with an impersonal Divine than with a personal Divine. For them, for certain minds, certain types of intelligence, it is easier; they understand better or think they understand better.

You see, there are certain... what we could call certain attributes of the Divine which it seems to them impossible to give to a personal being, and so they prefer to have a relation with an impersonal conception of the Divine. So, for them, he says this.

There are others who are able to have both at the same time, one completing the other; but for others still it is an antinomy, a contradiction. So, they prefer to choose one or the other. I think this is why he has put it like that, so that each one may choose the approach that’s easiest for him and the most expressive also. Essentially it is the same thing; in the human mind it becomes different. And then, man’s mind fashions man’s consciousness; and as for the human consciousness, well, it depends on one’s inner attitude and one’s tastes. The mind always needs to make divisions, otherwise it thinks that it does not understand. Probably it is to help him in his work, so that there may not be someone who says, “Ah, no, I don’t want the personal Divine!” — so he says, “It is all right, turn to an impersonal God.”
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Mother, when we make an effort, there’s something in us which becomes very self-satisfied and boastful and contented with this effort, and that spoils everything. Then how can we get rid of this?

Ah, that’s what looks on at what it is doing! There is always someone who observes when one is doing something. Now sometimes, he becomes proud. Obviously, this takes away much strength from the effort. I think it is that: it is the habit of looking at oneself acting, looking at oneself living. It is necessary to observe oneself but I think it is still more necessary to try to be absolutely sincere and spontaneous, very spontaneous in what one does: not always to go on observing oneself, looking at what one is doing, judging oneself — sometimes severely. In fact it is almost as bad as patting oneself with satisfaction, the two are equally bad. One should be so sincere in his aspiration that he doesn’t even know he is aspiring, that he becomes the aspiration itself. When this indeed can be realised, one truly attains to an extraordinary power.

One minute, one minute of this, and you can prepare years of realisation. When one is no longer a self-regarding being, an ego looking at itself acting, when one becomes the action itself, above all in the aspiration, this truly is good. When there is no longer a person who is aspiring, when it is an aspiration which leaps up with a fully concentrated impulsion, then truly it goes very far. Otherwise there is always mixed up in it a little vanity, a little self-complacency, a little self-pity also, all kinds of little things which come and spoil everything. But it is difficult.

Sweet Mother, here it is written: “In this Yoga the whole principle is to open oneself to the Divine Influence.” What does it mean exactly: “to open oneself to the Divine Influence”?

How many times I have explained this to you! At least thirty
times. What is the use of explaining? You must try, you must make an effort yourself. To explain is simply to try to give a formula to the mind which allows the thing to be done without any effort. One has a fine explanation in his head and believes that it is enough for the thing to be realised. But if one does just a little — even very awkwardly — gradually one progresses, one does better and better. When one does it really well, one understands what one is doing, and one also knows how one has learnt to do it, by doing it step by step, by trying.

What are the conditions in which there is a descent of faith?

The most important condition is an almost childlike trust, the candid trust of a child who is sure that it will come, who doesn’t even ask himself about it; when he needs something he is sure that it is going to come. Well, it is this, this kind of trust — this indeed is the most important condition.

To aspire is indispensable. But some people aspire with such a conflict inside them between faith and absence of faith, trust and distrust, between the optimism which is sure of victory and a pessimism which asks itself when the catastrophe will come. Now if this is in the being, you may aspire but you don’t get anything. And you say, “I aspired but didn’t get anything.” It is because you demolish your aspiration all the time by your lack of confidence. But if you truly have trust... Children when left to themselves and not deformed by older people have such a great trust that all will be well! For example, when they have a small accident, they never think that this is going to be something serious: they are spontaneously convinced that it will soon be over, and this helps so powerfully in putting an end to it.

Well, when one aspires for the Force, when one asks the Divine for help, if one asks with the unshakable certitude that it will come, that it is impossible that it won’t, then it is sure to come. It is this kind... yes, this is truly an inner opening,
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this trustfulness. And some people are constantly in this state. When there is something to be received, they are always there to receive it. There are others, when there is something to have, a force descends, they are always absent, they are always closed at that moment; while those who have this childlike trust are always there at the right time.

And it is strange, isn’t it, outwardly there is no difference. They may have exactly the same goodwill, the same aspiration, the same wish to do good, but those who have this smiling confidence within them, do not question, do not ask themselves whether they will have it or not have it, whether the Divine will answer or not — the question does not arise, it is something understood... “What I need will be given to me; if I pray I shall have an answer; if I am in a difficulty and ask for help, the help will come — and not only will it come but it will manage everything.” If the trust is there, spontaneous, candid, unquestioning, it works better than anything else, and the results are marvellous. It is with the contradictions and doubts of the mind that one spoils everything, with this kind of notion which comes when one is in difficulties: “Oh, it is impossible! I shall never manage it. And if it is going to be aggravated, if this condition I am in, which I don’t want, is going to grow still worse, if I continue to slide down farther and farther, if, if, if...” like that, and one builds a wall between oneself and the force one wants to receive. The psychic being has this trust, has it wonderfully, without a shadow, without an argument, without a contradiction. And when it is like that, there is not a prayer which does not get an answer, no aspiration which is not realised.

How can we get rid of abhimana?1

Oh, good heavens! First of all, see how utterly disastrous it is: it is very petty, it is destructive; and then take a step farther and hold

1 Hurt pride, self-pity because one feels ill-treated.
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yourself up to ridicule, see to what extent you are ludicrous. So, in this way you get rid of it. But so long as you take it seriously, so long as you justify the movement, so long as somewhere in the mind there’s the idea, “After all, it is quite natural, I was ill-treated and I suffer from the ill-treatment”, then it is finished, it will never go. But if you begin to understand that it is a sign of weakness, of inferiority — naturally, of a very considerable egoism, a narrow-mindedness, and above all of a pettiness of the feelings, a small-heartedness — if you understand that, you can fight it. But your thought should be in agreement. If there is the attitude, “I have been hurt, I am suffering, I am going to show that I am suffering”, then it is like that. I am not going so far as to mention people who nurse a fairly secret spirit of vengeance and say, “I have been made to suffer, I shall make them suffer.” This indeed becomes nasty enough for people to notice that it should not exist — though it is not always easy to resist. It indicates something very petty in the nature. It may be very sensitive, it may be very emotional, it may have a certain intensity but it is quite petty, it is all turned back on oneself, and is quite petty.

Of course, you can use your reason, if you have one which works. You can make use of the reason and can tell yourself something which is very true: that in our being it is only egoism which always suffers, and that if there was no egoism there would be no suffering, and that if one wants the spiritual life, one must overcome his egoism. So the first thing to do is to look straight at this suffering, perceive to what an extent it is the expression of a very petty egoism and then sweep the place clean, make a clean ground and say, “I don’t want this dirt, I am going to clean my inner chamber.”

Are even physical sufferings ascribable to the ego?

Physical sufferings? No, she² is not speaking of physical suffer-

² The child who asked the question.
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ings. Physical sufferings? One thing is certain, you know; I think this was in the system, in the nature, that it was invented as an indicator; because, for example, if the body was disorganised in some way or other and this caused no suffering at all, one would never look for a way to stop the disorganisation. One thinks of curing an illness only because one suffers. If it caused you no unpleasantness, you would never think of being cured of it. So, in the economy of Nature I think that the first purpose of physical suffering was to give you a warning.

Unfortunately, there is the vital which pokes its nose into the affair and takes a very perverse pleasure in increasing, twisting, sharpening the suffering. Now this deforms the whole system because instead of being an indicator, sometimes it becomes an occasion for enjoying the illness, for making oneself interesting, and also having the opportunity to pity oneself—all kinds of things which all come from the vital and are all detestable, one more than another. But originally I think that it was this: “Take care!” You see, it’s like a danger-signal: “Take care, there’s something out of order.”

Only, when one is not very much coddled, when one has a little endurance and decides within himself not to pay too much attention, quite remarkably the pain diminishes. And there are a number of illnesses or states of physical imbalance which can be cured simply by removing the effect, that is, by stopping the suffering. Usually it comes back because the cause is still there. If the cause of the illness is found and one acts directly on its cause, then one can be cured radically. But if one is not able to do that, one can make use of this influence, of this control over pain in order—by cutting off the pain or eliminating it or mastering it in oneself—to work on the illness. So this is an effect, so to say, from outside inwards; while the other is an effect from within outwards, which is much more lasting and much more complete. But the other also is effective.

For example, you see, some people suffer from unbearable toothache. It depends above all... some people are more or less
what I call “coddled”, that is, unable to resist any pain, to bear it; they immediately say, “I can’t! It is unbearable. I can’t bear any more!” Ah, this indeed changes nothing in the circumstances; it does not stop the suffering, because it is not by telling it that you don’t want it that you make it go away. But if one can do two things: either bring into oneself — for all nervous suffering, for example — bring into oneself a kind of immobility, as total as possible, on the part which hurts, this has the effect of an anaesthetic. If one succeeds in bringing an inner immobility, an immobility of the inner vibration, at the spot where one is suffering, it has exactly the same effect as an anaesthetic. It cuts off the contact between the place of pain and the brain, and once you have cut the contact, if you can keep this state long enough, the pain will disappear. You must form the habit of doing this. But you have the occasion, all the time, the opportunity to do it: you get a cut, get a knock, you see, one always gets a little hurt somewhere — especially when doing athletics, gymnastics and all that — well, these are opportunities given to us. Instead of sitting there observing the pain, trying to analyse it, concentrating upon it, which makes it increase indefinitely... There are people who think of something else but it does not last; they think of something else and then suddenly are drawn back to the place that hurts. But if one can do this... You see, since the pain is there, it proves that you are in contact with the nerve that’s transmitting the pain, otherwise you wouldn’t feel it. Well, once you know that you are in contact, you try to accumulate at that point as much immobility as you can, to stop the vibration of the pain; you will perceive then that it has the effect of a limb which goes to sleep when you are in an awkward position and that all of a sudden... you know, don’t you?... and then, when it stops, it begins to vibrate again terribly. Well, you deliberately try this kind of concentration of immobility in the painful nerve; at the painful point you bring as total an immobility as you can. Well, you will see that it works, as I told you, like an anaesthetic: it puts the thing to sleep. And then, if you can add to that a kind
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of inner peace and a trust that the pain will go away, well, I tell you that it will go.

Of all things, that which is considered the most difficult from the yogic point of view is toothache, because it is very close to the brain. Well, I know that this can be done truly to the extent of not feeling the pain at all; and this does not cure the bad tooth, but there are cases in which one can succeed in killing the painful nerve. Usually in a tooth it is the nerve which has been attacked by the caries, the disease, and which begins to protest with all its strength. So, if you succeed in establishing this immobility, you prevent it from vibrating, you prevent it from protesting. And what is remarkable is that if you do it fairly constantly, with sufficient perseverance, the sick nerve will die and you will not suffer at all any more. Because it was that which was suffering and when it is dead it does not suffer any longer. Try. I hope you never have a toothache. (Laughter)